

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 043993

MOSCOW FOR FOR TTBT/PNE DELEGATION

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM CAIRO DATED FEBRUARY 16, 1976
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC INFO ABU DHABI, AMMAN, DAMASCUS,
JIDDA, KHARTOUM, KUWAIT, TEHRAN, TEL AVIV, TRIPOLI
IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 2096

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PARM, TECH IAEA EG

SUBJECT: QATTARA DEPRESSION PROJECT

REF: CAIRO 1934 (NOTAL)

1. CAIRO PRESS FEBRUARY 17 GAVE FRONT PAGE COVERAGE TO
CURRENT QATTARA DEPRESSION FEASIBILITY STUDY GROUP
ACTIVITIES UNDER HEADLINES CLAIMING AMERICAN EXPERTS ARE
LEADING STUDIES OF USES OF PEACEFUL NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES IN
DIGGING CANAL. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS IS FIRST
PUBLICITY GIVEN TO ACTIVITIES OF GROUP SINCE PRESIDENT
SADAT ORDERED FEASIBILITY STUDIES LAST SUMMER.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SOME OF WHICH ATTRIBUTED
TO MINELECTRICITY UNDERSEC HAHER ABAZA. THREE U.S. EXPERTS
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WORKING FOR "AMERICAN ORGANIZATION FOR GEOUNUILEAR

SERVICES" (WHICH GIVES STORY OFFICIAL CHARACTER SINCE ALL ORGANIZATIONS IN EGYPT ARE GOVERNMENT CONTROLLED) ARE CHARGED WITH DECIDING WHERE AND HOW TO USE CLEAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES IN DIGGING CANAL FROM MEDITERRANEAN TO QATTARA DEPRESSION. EXPERTS REPORTEDLY HAVE RECOMMENDED FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS THAT FIRST TEN KILOMETERS BE DUG WITH CONVENTIONAL MEANS; LAST TEN WILL ALSO BE DUG WITH CONVENTIONAL MEANS, ANTICIPATING THAT THERE WILL ALREADY BE INSTALLATIONS IN AREA WHICH MIGHT BE DAMAGED. TOTAL LENGTH OF CANAL WILL BE 76 KILOMETERS. ESTIMATED TOTAL COST WILL BE LE 120 MILLION WITH NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVES AND LE 400 MILLION USING CONVENTIONAL MEANS.

3. UNDERSEC MAHER ABAZA AGAIN APPROACHED AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 16 WITH URGENT REQUEST THAT WE PROVIDE NAME OF AMERICAN CONSULTANT FOR ADVISORY BOARD BEFORE CURRENT PHASE OF FEASIBILITY STUDY FINISHED. ABAZA SAID IT INCREASINGLY EMBARRASSING NOT TO HAVE NAME OF AMERICAN MEMBER OF BOARD, ESPECIALLY SINCE WORK HAS COMMENCED. AMBASSADOR REMINDED ABAZA THAT IT IS NOT OUR CURRENT INTENTION TO INVOLVE OURSELVES IN NUCLEAR ASPECTS OF PROJECT FOR REASONS OF WHICH HE COMPLETELY AWARE. AMBASSADOR DID UNDERTAKE, HOWEVER, TO ONCE AGAIN ASK FOR NAME OF EXPERT IN HOPES IT WILL BE AVAILABLE BEFORE THE CURRENT WORK ENDS ON OR ABOUT FEBRUARY 20.

4. REQUEST DEPARTMENT CABLE NAME OF EXPERT, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, BEFORE THAT DATE. ELLIS UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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